

DECEMBER 1964

Approved For Release 2000/08/03 : CIA-RDP

STATINTL

Harper's magazine

The Master Spy Who Almost Got Away

By Irwin Ross

For fifteen years the perfect model of a Swedish Air Force Colonel fooled everyone but the Russians, who found and made the most of a fatal flaw in his character.

On the morning of June 20, 1963, a tall man strode rapidly across a bridge in downtown Stockholm. Three plainclothes detectives suddenly appeared in his path. One of them extended his hand, affably introduced himself, and told Colonel Stig Erik Constans Wennerström that he was under arrest. The Colonel made no protest and quietly followed the detectives to their parked car. Thus ended one of the most successful Soviet espionage careers since the outbreak of the Cold War.

Wennerström's arrest rocked Sweden. The black streamers across Stockholm's newspapers did not exaggerate: "THE BIGGEST SWEDISH ESPIONAGE SCANDAL OF ALL TIME"—"SWEDISH COLONEL SOLD DEFENSE SECRETS WORTH BILLIONS"—"SWEDISH COLONEL HIRED BY THE RUSSIANS FOR 15 YEARS."

The shock waves reached to London and Washington, for the Colonel, most recently a disarmament expert in the Swedish Foreign Office, had been a wholesale merchant of espionage—compromising not merely Swedish but also British, American, and NATO military secrets. He ultimately admitted to 160 instances of espionage against Sweden; the court, imposing a life sentence, calculated that he had collected nearly \$100,000 from his Soviet paymasters. Among other things, Wennerström betrayed Sweden's air-defense system and provided the Russians with design details of its newest military aircraft, as well as information about British and American missiles.

In both Stockholm and Washington, where he had served five years as air attaché, Wennerström's arrest brought incredulity as well as shock. The Wennerströms were a well-known and likable couple on the cocktail circuit—his wife Ulla irrepressible and somewhat flighty, the fifty-six-year-old Colonel a bit reserved but invariably charming and gracious. Women found him attractive—a lean, athletically built man with the clean-cut features that retain the glow of youth in

MISSING PAGE

ORIGINAL DOCUMENT MISSING PAGE(S):

to article